

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN
AT LAW AND IN ADMIRALTY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No.

APPROXIMATELY \$21,000.00 IN UNITED
STATES CURRENCY,

Defendant.

VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL FORFEITURE IN REM

The United States of America, by its attorneys, Matthew D. Krueger, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, and Scott J. Campbell, Assistant United States Attorney for this district, alleges the following in accordance with Supplemental Rule G(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure:

Nature of the Action

1. This is a civil action to forfeit property to the United States of America, under 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6), for violations of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1).

The Defendant In Rem

2. The defendant property, approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency, was seized on or about August 6, 2019, from Nelson Blas at or near 2XXX W. Rawson Avenue, Oak Creek, Wisconsin.

3. The defendant property is presently in the custody of the United States Marshal Service in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Jurisdiction and Venue

4. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over an action commenced by the United States under 28 U.S.C. § 1345, and over an action for forfeiture under 28 U.S.C. § 1355(a).

5. This Court has *in rem* jurisdiction over the defendant property under 28 U.S.C. § 1355(b).

6. Venue is proper in this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1355(b)(1), because the acts or omissions giving rise to the forfeiture occurred in this district.

Basis for Forfeiture

7. The defendant property, approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency, is subject to forfeiture to the United States of America under 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6) because it was used or intended to be used in exchange for controlled substances, represents proceeds of trafficking in controlled substances, or was used or intended to be used to facilitate a violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1).

Facts

8. Marijuana is a Schedule I controlled substance.

9. As a convicted felon, Nelson Blas is prohibited from possessing a firearm.

August 6, 2019 execution of search warrant at Nelson Blas and T.M.'s residence

10. On August 6, 2019, officers executed a search warrant at the residence of Nelson Blas and his girlfriend, who has the initials T.M., located at 2XXX W. Rawson Avenue, Oak Creek, Wisconsin (“Oak Creek residence”).

11. Nelson Blas, T.M., Nelson Blas’s brother – who has the initials T.B. – and a minor child were present during execution of the search warrant.

12. On August 6, 2019, Nelson Blas had the following items on his person:
- A. Approximately \$738 inside a Crown Royal bag, which currency is not included in the defendant currency in this case;
 - B. A glass pipe;
 - C. A baggie containing approximately 2.2 grams of marijuana;
 - D. One vape cartridge; and
 - E. Two marijuana (THC) vape cartridges.

13. On August 6, 2019, the following items, among other things, were inside the Oak Creek residence:

- A. In the master bedroom:
 - i. Approximately 490 grams of marijuana, along with a digital scale and packaging bags – all located inside a backpack;
 - ii. A baggie containing approximately 2.1 grams of marijuana;
 - iii. A bowl containing approximately 5 grams of marijuana;
 - iv. A grinder;
 - v. A loaded handgun under the mattress;
 - vi. Approximately \$3,000 in United States currency, which is a portion of the defendant currency in this case. The currency was inside a box for THC vape cartridges, which box also contained several THC vape cartridges – all located inside the closet; and
 - vii. A total of approximately 13 THC cartridges.
- B. In the basement:
 - i. A plastic tote with packaging items containing marijuana residue;
 - ii. A large plastic container with additional packaging items and empty baggies;
 - iii. A plastic tote containing approximately 226 grams of marijuana labeled as being sourced from California;

iv. Approximately \$18,000 in United States currency, which is the remaining portion of the defendant currency in this case. The currency was located inside a Crown Royal bag, which was inside a black trash bag, which was inside a box – all located about ten feet from the 226 grams of marijuana described in paragraph 13.B.iii.

- a. The approximately \$18,000 in United States currency was bundled and rubber banded in eighteen \$1,000 stacks.
- b. A drug detection canine conducted a drug sniff of the approximately \$18,000 in United States currency and positively alerted to the presence of narcotics on the currency.

C. In the kitchen:

- i. Four THC vape cartridges;
- ii. Baggies and vacuum-seal bags with marijuana residue;
- iii. A glass pipe and rolling papers;
- iv. A container with THC dab residue; and
- v. An electronic nail system used to smoke “dabs or shatter.”¹

D. In a detached garage: A box containing approximately 100 empty plastic vape cartridge packaging containers.

14. On August 6, 2019, one of Nelson Blas’s cell phones contained, among other things, the following:

- A. An incoming message dated August 4, 2019, from an individual having the initials C.J. asking to purchase marijuana;
- B. An outgoing message dated August 6, 2019, to an individual having the initials J.H. stating that THC vape cartridges were \$25;
- C. Flight information for Nelson Blas flying to Los Angeles, California, on July 27, 2019; and
- D. Flight information for Nelson Blas to fly to Los Angeles, California, on August 8, 2019.

¹ Dabs and shatter are concentrated forms of THC that are turned into a hard plastic-like material. A heated tool is used to burn them and then inhale the fumes.

Administrative Forfeiture Proceedings

15. On or about August 30, 2019, the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”) began administrative forfeiture proceedings against the approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency seized from Nelson Blas’s residence on August 6, 2019, on the ground that the seized currency was used or intended to be used in exchange for controlled substances or was proceeds of trafficking in controlled substances.

16. On or about September 23, 2019, Nelson Blas filed a claim with the DEA in the administrative forfeiture proceeding to the defendant approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency.

Warrant for Arrest In Rem

17. Upon the filing of this complaint, the plaintiff requests that the Court issue an arrest warrant *in rem* pursuant to Supplemental Rule G(3)(b), which the plaintiff will execute upon the defendant property pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1335(d) and Supplemental Rule G(3)(c).

Claims for Relief

18. The plaintiff alleges and incorporates by reference the paragraphs above.

19. By the foregoing and other acts, the defendant property, approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency, was used or intended to be used in exchange for controlled substances, represents proceeds of trafficking in controlled substances, or was used or intended to be used to facilitate a violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1).

20. The defendant approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency is therefore subject to forfeiture to the United States of America under 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6).

WHEREFORE, the United States of America prays that a warrant of arrest for the defendant property, approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency, be issued; that due notice be given to all interested parties to appear and show cause why the forfeiture should not

be decreed; that judgment declare the defendant property to be condemned and forfeited to the United States of America for disposition according to law; and that the United States of America be granted such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and equitable, together with the costs and disbursements of this action.

Dated at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this 5th day of December, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

MATTHEW D. KRUEGER
United States Attorney

By: s/SCOTT J. CAMPBELL
SCOTT J. CAMPBELL
Assistant United States Attorney
Scott J. Campbell Bar Number: 1017721
Attorney for Plaintiff
Office of the United States Attorney
Eastern District of Wisconsin
517 East Wisconsin Avenue, Room 530
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202
Telephone: (414) 297-1700
Fax: (414) 297-1738
E-Mail: scott.campbell@usdoj.gov

Verification

I, Jason Baranek, hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that I am a Task Force Officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Milwaukee, that I have read the foregoing Verified Complaint for Civil Forfeiture *in rem* and know the contents thereof, and that the factual matters contained in paragraphs 8 through 14 of the Verified Complaint are true to my own knowledge.

The sources of my knowledge and information are the official files and records of the United States, information supplied to me by other law enforcement officers, as well as my investigation of this case, together with others, as a Task Force Officer with DEA.

I hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date: 12/04/2019

s/JASON BARANEK
Jason Baranek
Task Force Officer

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

Place an "X" in the appropriate box: Green Bay Division Milwaukee Division

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff _____
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)
 Scott J. Campbell, AUSA
 US Attorney's Office, #530 Federal Building
 517 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53202 (414-297-1700)

DEFENDANTS

APPROXIMATELY \$21,000.00 IN UNITED STATES CURRENCY

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant Milwaukee

(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION *(Place an "X" in One Box Only)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Federal Question
<i>(U.S. Government Not a Party)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 U.S. Government Defendant | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Diversity
<i>(Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)</i> |

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES *(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)*

	PTF	DEF		PTF	DEF
Citizen of This State	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Citizen of Another State	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Foreign Nation	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

IV. NATURE OF SUIT *(Place an "X" in One Box Only)*

CONTRACT	TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
<input type="checkbox"/> 110 Insurance	PERSONAL INJURY	PERSONAL INJURY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881	<input type="checkbox"/> 375 False Claims Act
<input type="checkbox"/> 120 Marine	<input type="checkbox"/> 310 Airplane	<input type="checkbox"/> 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 422 Appeal 28 USC 158	<input type="checkbox"/> 400 State Reapportionment
<input type="checkbox"/> 130 Miller Act	<input type="checkbox"/> 315 Airplane Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157	<input type="checkbox"/> 410 Antitrust
<input type="checkbox"/> 140 Negotiable Instrument	<input type="checkbox"/> 320 Assault, Libel & Slander	<input type="checkbox"/> 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability	PROPERTY RIGHTS	<input type="checkbox"/> 430 Banks and Banking
<input type="checkbox"/> 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> 330 Federal Employers' Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 370 Other Fraud	<input type="checkbox"/> 820 Copyrights	<input type="checkbox"/> 450 Commerce
<input type="checkbox"/> 151 Medicare Act	<input type="checkbox"/> 340 Marine	<input type="checkbox"/> 371 Truth in Lending	<input type="checkbox"/> 830 Patent	<input type="checkbox"/> 460 Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl. Veterans)	<input type="checkbox"/> 345 Marine Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 380 Other Personal Property Damage	<input type="checkbox"/> 840 Trademark	<input type="checkbox"/> 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations
<input type="checkbox"/> 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> 350 Motor Vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/> 385 Property Damage Product Liability	LABOR	<input type="checkbox"/> 480 Consumer Credit
<input type="checkbox"/> 160 Stockholders' Suits	<input type="checkbox"/> 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 390 Other Personal Injury	SOCIAL SECURITY	<input type="checkbox"/> 490 Cable/Sat TV
<input type="checkbox"/> 190 Other Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> 360 Other Personal Injury	<input type="checkbox"/> 400 Other Personal Injury	<input type="checkbox"/> 861 HIA (1395ff)	<input type="checkbox"/> 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange
<input type="checkbox"/> 195 Contract Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice	<input type="checkbox"/> 405 Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 862 Black Lung (923)	<input type="checkbox"/> 890 Other Statutory Actions
<input type="checkbox"/> 196 Franchise			<input type="checkbox"/> 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g))	<input type="checkbox"/> 891 Agricultural Acts
			<input type="checkbox"/> 864 SSID Title XVI	<input type="checkbox"/> 893 Environmental Matters
			<input type="checkbox"/> 865 RSI (405(g))	<input type="checkbox"/> 895 Freedom of Information Act
				<input type="checkbox"/> 896 Arbitration
				<input type="checkbox"/> 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision
				<input type="checkbox"/> 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
REAL PROPERTY	CIVIL RIGHTS	PRISONER PETITIONS	FEDERAL TAX SUITS	
<input type="checkbox"/> 210 Land Condemnation	<input type="checkbox"/> 440 Other Civil Rights	<input type="checkbox"/> 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 220 Foreclosure	<input type="checkbox"/> 441 Voting	Habeas Corpus:	<input type="checkbox"/> 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	
<input type="checkbox"/> 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	<input type="checkbox"/> 442 Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 530 General		
<input type="checkbox"/> 240 Torts to Land	<input type="checkbox"/> 443 Housing/ Accommodations	<input type="checkbox"/> 535 Death Penalty		
<input type="checkbox"/> 245 Tort Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 540 Mandamus & Other		
<input type="checkbox"/> 290 All Other Real Property	<input type="checkbox"/> 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 550 Civil Rights		
	<input type="checkbox"/> 448 Education	<input type="checkbox"/> 555 Prison Condition		
		<input type="checkbox"/> 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement		
		<input type="checkbox"/> 462 Naturalization Application		
		<input type="checkbox"/> 463 Habeas Corpus - Alien Detainee (Prisoner Petition)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> 465 Other Immigration Actions		

V. ORIGIN

(Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding 2 Removed from State Court 3 Remanded from Appellate Court 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) 6 Multidistrict Litigation

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing *(Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity)*:
21 USC § 881(a)(6)

Brief description of cause:

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION
UNDER F.R.C.P. 23

DEMAND \$

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:
JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions):

JUDGE

DOCKET NUMBER

DATE

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

12/05/2019

s/SCOTT J. CAMPBELL

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT #

AMOUNT

2 PLEASANT

JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN
AT LAW AND IN ADMIRALTY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No.

APPROXIMATELY \$21,000.00 IN UNITED
STATES CURRENCY,

Defendant.

WARRANT FOR ARREST IN REM

To: THE UNITED STATES MARSHAL
Eastern District of Wisconsin

WHEREAS, a Verified Complaint for Civil Forfeiture *in rem* was filed on the 5th day of December, 2019, by the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, which seeks the forfeiture of the above-named defendant property pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 881(a)(6), and which prays that process issue to enforce the forfeiture and to give notice to all interested parties to appear before the court and show cause why the forfeiture should not be decreed; and due proceedings being had, that the defendant property be condemned and forfeited to the use of the United States of America.

YOU ARE THEREFORE HEREBY COMMANDED to attach and arrest the defendant property, approximately \$21,000.00 in United States currency, which was seized on or about August 6, 2019, from Nelson Blas at or near 2XXX W. Rawson Avenue, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, and which is presently in the custody of the United States Marshal Service in Milwaukee,

Wisconsin, in the Eastern District of Wisconsin, and to detain the same until further order of this Court.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2019, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

STEPHEN C. DRIES
Clerk of Court

By:

Deputy Clerk

Return

This warrant was received and executed with the arrest of the above-named defendant.

Date warrant received: _____

Date warrant executed: _____

Name and title of arresting officer: _____

Signature of arresting officer: _____

Date: _____